

the chronicle

Mark's new beat



Ex-Pc tunes into second career after going blind

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Ring of success

Pub owners celebrate picking up double award

Page 3

Mick sacking

We were left with no other choice – Morgan

Page 40



Town bid to have a Portas makeover

DUDLEY is one of two towns in the Black Country definitely vying to be chosen as a pilot project for retail guru Mary Portas' bid to save Britain's struggling high streets.

But Dudley Council has decided not to put Stourbridge forward, after Dudley was labelled as the worst in the country for empty shops.

Now Dudley will be competing with Walsall to become one of 12 towns to trial recommendations and earn a slice of £1 million to boost trade.

Some 29 per cent of shops in Dudley are empty, giving it the highest vacancy rate of any medium sized town in the country.

Benefit

Dudley Council leader Les Jones said: "This is something we believe will benefit the town and there was no sense in just ignoring it."

"This could turn out to be very important project for the country as a whole and we want to be part of it."

He said Dudley would be put forward, rather than Halesowen or Stourbridge, due to its problem with empty shops.

Ms Portas' report for the Government on the decline of town centres says years of neglect and the growth of online shopping has left many areas "dying".

Store start in summer

BUILDING of a Tesco supermarket in Stourbridge will begin in the summer. Preparatory work is already under way to transform the Crown Centre and the project is set to gain pace.

The nearby Bell Street Car Park was closing today (Thursday) and will be demolished in April to make way for the £50 million development. Tesco bosses said an exact start date was not finalised but residents would see the building taking shape by December.

• Car park closes - Page 3

£11,000 TO AID STREET PASTORS

By Andrew Turton

A COMMUNITY group in Stourbridge has been praised for the "amazing job" it does in keeping night-time revellers safe and helping cut crime in the town.

Stourbridge Street Pastors have been commended by police and councillors for helping to reduce the amount of anti-social behaviour in the area. The group, which has just been awarded a grant of £11,000, is made up of 30 volunteers who go into the town centre mainly on Saturday nights to offer help and support to those on nights out.

The cash has been awarded by Dudley's community safety partnership, Safe and Sound, and Dudley Primary Care Trust.

Dudley Council's deputy leader, Councillor Tim Wright, said: "Stourbridge Street Pastors have shown how effective they are in calming aggressive situations and supporting vulnerable people."

"We have a thriving night time economy which is made all the safer with the help of Stourbridge Street Pastors."

Inspector Eddie Boyle, of Dudley Police, said: "The Street Pastors do an amazing job and have assisted the police tremendously over busy weekends when people are out socialising."

"They also help disperse any possible anti-social behaviour in the town making it a safe and enjoyable place to come and visit. Street Pastors also look out for the welfare of people whilst they are out by calling for a taxi to take them home, offering water and foil blankets."

Continue

"Street pastors should be encouraged to continue with their good work in helping and assisting others."

Street Pastors management team chairman Clive Dudbridge said the money would help the group continue into the future.

"We are really pleased to have received this money as it will make things easier," he said. "There is a lot of administration that goes on behind the scenes and it has been so hectic at times."

He added: "It is good that we are still getting a good reaction from everyone we meet when we are out on nights."

The pastors, who have been in the town since 2009, are based at New Road Methodist Church on the ring road.

Volunteers from 13 local churches patrol town centre streets on Saturday nights and some Thursday nights from 10pm to 3am.

Everything is Rosie for children



Rosie and Ruggles meet Rubi Bradley, aged four, and Evie Mackenzie, three

HUNDREDS of children fulfilled their dream of meeting TV stars Rosie and Ruggles at Dudley's Merry Hill shopping centre.

Parents and children began queuing for their free tickets to mingle with the characters from the CBeebies Everything's Rosie series an hour before they were available.

It ran much more smoothly than last April's date with TV character Peppa Pig, when a scramble left many upset to find all 500 tickets gone before they arrived. First in

line was 40-year-old dad Wayne Hawkes, of Ashdene Gardens, Wordsley, who had been sent to make sure he snapped up tickets for daughters Olivia, aged three, and Sophie, one. He said: "We remember the chaos of the Peppa Pig show last year - so I was under orders to get here early to make sure of these tickets."

And, after meeting Rosie and her rabbit friend Ruggles, four-year-old Rubi Bradley, of Kinver Street, Wordsley, said: "She was gorgeous."

Police to shut the counter at night

PLANS to close Stourbridge police station to the public overnight are to go-ahead.

The front desk at the station in New Road will be be shut between 6pm and 10am from April.

West Midlands Police, which has drawn up the cost-cutting plans, said demand for public counter is low during the evenings.

It is part of the force's battle to save £120 million over the next four years, which also includes the loss of more than 2,250 police officer and staff posts.

Stourbridge Police Station is one of five in the Black Country which will be affected by the changes.

Backed

Halesowen will close overnight between 6pm and 10am while the opening hours at Dudley will be reduced, despite a campaign against the plans.

More than 2,500 residents and businesses backed a petition drawn up by Dudley North MP Ian Austin.

But plans to change opening hours from 7am to 10pm to 10am to 6pm, have been approved.

Mr Austin said: "We were promised front-line services would not be hit, but thousands of officers are being sacked and our police station is closing in the evening because the government is cutting police spending too far and too fast."

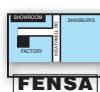
Aerospace firm for sale

AEROSPACE firm Hampson Industries has put itself up for sale.

The Brierley Hill-based company employs just a handful of staff at its offices at Waterfront West, with most of its factories now in the US, where it has suffered a string of production problems.

Most recently it has had issues over testing and customer approval of its largest tooling order, delaying deliveries by months.

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Ex-Pc tuned into new job after going blind

A FEW weeks before his wedding, Mark Ward was busy writing the speech he would read in front of his guests.

However, by the time it got to the big day he was unable to – because he couldn't see it.

The 51-year-old said that his eyesight had diminished so rapidly that he even had to strain to make out his wife Jill on their wedding day.

The former police officer said that doctors have been baffled by his blindness for almost 30 years.

But advancements in scientific research have recently revealed that Mark's condition is inherited, due to a genetic mutation that has been passed down his family.

Mark, who lives in Melrose Avenue, Stourbridge, said his condition lead to a change in career.

"I had always wanted to join the police force and it was my main focus when I was a teenager," said Mark, who grew up in Penn, Wolverhampton, and went to St Peter's Collegiate School.

"It's one of those jobs where there is a lot of tedium and then a few minutes of excitement, but I loved it." Mark was police officer in Stourbridge when in 1983 the eyesight in his left eye started to go.

"Jill was also in the police force at Brierley Hill and my eyesight started to deteriorate just before our wedding in May 1983," said Mark.

"I was still able to cope as I had the sight in my right eye but it wasn't long before I was stopped driving at work and given a beat around Wollaston." Mark said when the



Mark Ward, who took up at work piano tuning after losing his sight

sight in his right eye started to deteriorate he went to a rehabilitation centre in Torquay and was taught typing and Braille. He met a piano tuner and decided to go to The Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford where he studied for three years to become one.

Similar

Now Mark visits hundreds of schools and homes across the West Midlands and is a regular at Fallings Park Primary, Wolverhampton, Pedmore Primary, Stourbridge, and Castle High, Dudley.

"I enjoy being a piano tuner as it is quite similar to being in the police force as you are meeting new people all the time," he said. "I did feel frustrated at first as I couldn't drive

so felt I had lost a lot of my independence.

"Even though you don't want to rely on other people sometimes you have to, and so a lot falls on Jill."

"However, the last time I saw Jill properly she was 26 and so that is how I still see her, which she is quite pleased about."

Mark said he can make out light and dark objects but this hasn't stopped him from enjoying extreme sports. Before he lost his sight he enjoyed sub-aqua diving and a few years ago he decided to take up kayaking. He also enjoys skiing.

The couple have a son, James, 26, a maths teacher in Chester. Mark said thankfully the defect will not be passed on, as only women can carry it but only affects men.



Back on the water – Mark kayaking



On the slopes – Mark skiing



Mark and Jill on their wedding day

Learning to make music
A NEW music course aimed at 16 to 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training is being run at a Stourbridge studio by Halesowen College music lecturers Alex Griffin, of Ned's Atomic Dustbin fame, and Richard March of Pop Will Eat Itself.

The 12-week Level 1 Certificate in performing arts music performance and production will be at Base Studios, which has recording and rehearsal facilities.

It will run every Thursday from noon to 5pm. Call 0121 602 7777 ext 518 for details.

It's Connexions to cannelloni

A BID to transform a former careers advice centre in Stourbridge into an Italian restaurant and takeaway will be debated by planners.

A planning application has been submitted for the old Connexions base in High Street which shut in March. The plans say the premises would be open late for people visiting the town's pubs.

Boost for jobs

AN ENGINEERING firm is to take on five extra staff after winning a record orders. A new management team has taken over at Thompson Friction Welding, Hereward Rise, Halesowen.

First aid classes

TWO child first aid courses will be held by the parents' charity NCT in Halesowen. They are being run by the Stourbridge and Halesowen branch on February 25 and March 31, call 07980 928341.

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Car park closes to make way for centre revamp

Bell pulls in awards



Owner Joanne Narbett with head chef Trevor Fear celebrating the Bell and Cross pub's success

A VILLAGE pub has been voted the best in the region by the readers of The Good Beer Guide. The Bell and Cross, Clent, near Stourbridge, has won the 2012 Heart of England Pub of the Year and the Worcestershire County Dining Pub of the Year for the fifth time in a row.

Husband and wife team Roger and Joanne Narbett have run the pub with their business partner Paul Mohan since 2000. "It's a fantastic achievement for The Bell and Cross team and for putting the beautiful village of Clent on the map once again," said Mr Narbett. "These awards recognise the hard work put in by every member of the team without whose support these awards would not have been possible."

Mr Narbett was chef of the England football team for 10 years and worked at the Dorchester Hotel, London, while Mr Mohan was a chef at the Hyatt Regency, Birmingham, and Claridges Hotel, London.

DRIVERS wanting to park in the centre of Stourbridge will have to find an alternative to the 250-space Bell Street multi-storey car park which closes today (Thursday).

It will be demolished in April to make way for the revamp of the Crown Centre which will see a new Tesco built, creating 400 jobs.

Dudley Council said the Rye Market Centre multi-storey car park in the town centre has more than 200 spare spaces each day.

Shoppers have been told the 90-space Church Street car park at the top of High Street, near Hagley Road, has long-stay capacity.

Leading councillors describe the revamp as "the most significant regeneration scheme in Stourbridge for many decades".

Councillor Patrick Harley, the council's cabinet member for transportation, said: "We have carried out assessments of all of our car parks to determine usage rates, and we are confident that we have the capacity to meet the demand."

"It must be stressed that Bell Street is an old and outdated building which was

due for demolition regardless of this exciting regeneration development."

He said there were alternative car parks and that Rye Market was only 200 metres from Bell Street.

A 543-space underground car park is being built as part of the Crown Centre redevelopment.

Councillor Angus Adams, the council's cabinet member for regeneration, said: "This multi-million-pound project marks the most significant regeneration scheme in Stourbridge for many decades."

"We anticipate it acting as a catalyst for further investment and development in the town."

The arrival of Tesco will provide an anchor store for the town which we hope will benefit local people and lead to an increased footfall in the town to the benefit of our other shops."

Warning over con callers

RESIDENTS have been warned about bogus mobility equipment sellers in Dudley. The borough's community safety partnership, Safe and Sound, said bogus sellers target vulnerable and elderly people by calling to arrange an appointment before visiting their home. The caller will often claim to be working with social services. Residents can check by calling with Dudley Council on 01384 812045.

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Gang came from Yorks for £5,000 metal raid

School's wizard musical



A GANG of seven men travelled from Yorkshire to break into a Lye foundry to steal metal castings worth £5,000, a court heard.

The target for the raid was Vanguard Foundry in Engine Lane, where the men cut through a wire fence.

The company has suffered five similar thefts in the five months leading up to the offence. Police chased the gang and caught three of them but the other four got away, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Jailing two of the men and giving a suspended sentence to the third, Judge Martin Walsh said: "Vanguard was identified as the target and metal to the value of about £5,000 was in the process of being stolen."

Adrian Buckley, aged 42, Warren Scott, 27, and Lee Thurston, 30, all from Rotherham, Yorkshire, admitted stealing the metal at around 11pm on October 30.

Thurston, who was released from a five-and-a-half-year sentence on licence three months before the offence, was jailed for 20 months and Buckley for 15 months.

Scott was given 12 months in jail, suspended for two years, put on probation for two years and ordered to attend a programme with 200 hours community service and a three month curfew.

Mr Andrew Baker, for Scott and Buckley, said they had been "foot soldiers" in the offence, which had been planned by others.

Mr Geoffrey Dann, for Thurston, said he had been recruited by others.

Zumba in aid of hospice

A SPONSORED Zumba event is being staged to raise funds for Stourbridge's Mary Stevens Hospice.

The event will be at Hagley Community Centre on Sunday, February 19. Organisers hope around 600 people will take part in the hourly sessions from 11.30am to 5.30pm.

A magical musical was brought to life by pupils at a Stourbridge school. Pupils from Ridgewood High School in Wollaston gave two performances of the Wizard of Oz tonight last week. As well as a cast of 200, many more students were working behind the scenes.



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Village showtime



Getting ready for the show . . . Katie Tomkins, left, Ben Edwards and Jess Harris during rehearsals

MUSIC and comedy direct from the streets of America arrives in Clent, near Stourbridge, when a theatre group stages its latest production this week. The COMIC company presents the musical *Guys and Dolls*.

It will be at Sunfield Community Theatre this Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Their previous performances include *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific* and *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Evening shows start at 7.30pm with tickets priced at £12. For the first time, COMIC will also be doing a Saturday matinee starting at 2.30pm.

Traffic fears over scheme to create a glass centre

A MAIN road branded as a nightmare could become even worse if plans for a £5 million glass museum in Wordsley go-ahead, residents fear.

Proposals are being drawn up for the attraction on the former Stuart Crystal site and opposite the Red House Glass Cone.

Formal plans have yet to be submitted but residents living nearby fear the museum would increase traffic on the A491, one of the busiest road in the borough.

People say it is "bumper-to-bumper" all day.

Resident Paul Price, aged 63, who has lived in Audnam for more than 30 years, said: "I am not against progress and I am not against the new glass museum in itself.

"However, the A491 is already absolute chaos throughout the entire day."

Dudley Council regeneration chief, Councillor Angus Adams, said there were problems which needed to be addressed.

"Improving the road network is something which will be looked at as part of this scheme," he said.

Warning over raids on sheds

A SPATE of thefts from shed in Quarry Bank has prompted police to launch an awareness campaign.

They say owners could even consider putting up net curtains on windows to block the view into sheds.

Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood police neighbourhood team is offering advice after three recent reports of shed break-ins. Sgt Duncan Rudge said: "I want to try to put a stop to this."

He urged people to lock sheds with a padlock or mortice deadlock as they often contained ladders and tools suitable for breaking into homes. People needed to check if winter damage had made access easier.

Sgt Rudge added: "Please contact the team or Dudley police on 101 if you see any suspicious activity."

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On the cusp of great things – Bridgnorth Station was in a state of limbo in 1968



The last passenger train at Bridgnorth in 1963



Keith Beddoes, of Telford, who led the campaign to bring the SVR back to life



Film star David Niven was a visitor in 1976

Anniversary celebrates golden age of steam

STEAM railway enthusiasts in the Midlands have been celebrating a landmark anniversary.

The first train ran on the Severn Valley Railway 150 years ago and the first passengers hopped aboard on February 1, 1862.

That first train went from Worcester to Shrewsbury but these days it extends 16 miles from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth.

It is no longer in the commercial transport business. A paid staff of about 70 are responsible for administration and commercial activities and about 250,000 passengers use the line each year.

Official celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary will be held in May.

Mike York, director of Severn Valley Railway Holdings, said: "It was never the most popular of railway lines and was not the most successful as a commercial operation.

MEMORY LANE

by Simon Hardy

"It relied as much on fate as it did on regular passengers."

The original Severn Valley line linked Hartlebury, near Droitwich, with Shrewsbury, a distance of 40 miles.

Locomotives and rolling stock were borrowed and the line was absorbed into the Great Western Railway in the 1870s. In 1878 a link line was constructed from Bewdley to Kidderminster.

That enabled trains to run directly from the West Midlands.

The Severn Valley line was never financially successful.

During the Great Western days the pattern of services remained similar, with usually four passenger trains per day in each direction, and a few more on the section south of

Bridgnorth. Freight traffic, which was mostly agricultural or coal from the Highley area, was the principal source of revenue.

The advent of the lorry in the 1930s spelled disaster, although the line was strategically useful in the Second World War.

Bridgnorth town councillor Brian Jones, who was the railway's civil engineer between 1972 and 1982, said: "In 1947, when the railways were nationalised, it became part of British Railways until November 1963 when it closed due to the Dr Beeching cuts.

"The SVR Society opened in July 1965 and it took five years of negotiations to get the five-mile line between Bridgnorth and Kidderminster open."

The line has featured in a number of films including *Candleshoe*, starring David Niven, and was used for the *Sherlock Holmes* blockbuster, *A Game of Shadows*.



Saved from the scrapyard, the Severn Valley Railway's first loco



An aerial view of Bridgnorth Railway Station as it looks today

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Old Fashioned Values Pay Dividends For Cloudy2Clear

It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

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at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people money, although that obviously helps. Some people may call the way I do things a little old-fashioned but it's amazing how a simple mix of manners, punctuality and personal service increases your business. I'm constantly taken aback by customers who are shocked that we turn up when we say we will, do the job that is required and clean up after ourselves.

I'm afraid it indicates to me that there are many companies who don't and that's just not fair to the customer."

Cloudy2Clear service the Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Cannock, Bridgnorth & Stourbridge areas and Brian is finding that his ethos is proving to be a major factor in his success. *'When I started out I just did the things that came naturally to me. I really hate being let down by tradesmen so I was*

determined not to let that happen to my customers. As it turns out that little bit of extra care has meant I get friends and family of people I have done work for on the phone constantly so it's not just personally satisfying but good for business too. At the end of the day it's not rocket science, is it?'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Brian a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!



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Grave reservations over the new HS2

HS2, HAS the nod, at an estimate of a mere £ 32 billion we can now go ahead and build our very own high speed railway.

The chairman of HS2 Plc, assures us the cost of this venture will not rise over the time it takes to construct this mammoth building project, and indeed he fully expects it to come in under budget and on time. Exactly what planet does he live on?

But not to worry about costs and schedules, we are confidently assured this project will generate 20,000 jobs within the UK. Have we any guarantee it will not also attract a further 20,000

immigrants from all over Europe to fill those jobs?

British employers are fond of telling us foreign labour is more reliable than the home-grown variety, but the bottom line is they are cheaper, it all comes down to money in the end, immigrant labour works for poorer wages and conditions than we do. Who, I wonder will get the contract to build the new coaches that will be required to be built for these new super trains? Will it go, as it ought to, to our own Bombardier, or will it once again be awarded to a German competitor?

Only time will tell. At the end of the

day we must question whether it will ever be used as intended, as a fast efficient means of transport made available to the country as a whole, or will it be restricted to those fortunate few who can afford a ticket.

I have grave reservations over the fact most of the voices raised in favour of HS2 are well-heeled businessmen, who say it will be beneficial to the country, but, of course they would, wouldn't they, they will be the only ones with the wherewithal to use it.

B PARSONS,
Millard Road,
Coseley

Tyranny of mobiles while in a theatre

ON A recent visit to The Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton for the pantomime it proved to be excellent, a most enjoyable show.

I was seated next to a young man holding his smart phone. I would suggest nuisance phones would be a more appropriate name.

Prior to the start I said I hoped he would not be displaying this contraption during the show. He said he would not, and duly complied. Why then, even after a request for mobiles to be switched off, did some people insist on these brightly lit phones being flashed around? Thankfully an usherette shone her light on the offending phone but what is it with these people cannot leave them alone even for a couple of hours.

MRS L SHELDON
Dudley

LETTERS to the Editor

POST

Stourbridge Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES

E-MAIL

stourbridgechronos@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Don't meddle with politics of Scotland

AS A British subject with strong Scottish leanings, I am dismayed at the histrionics coming out of Westminster on the subject of a Scottish Referendum on Independence.

Cameron, Clegg and Milliband, by all their posturing are playing into Alex Salmond's hands and are in danger of alienating the Scots.

However, this may be a ploy on their part to rid themselves of the Scottish vote which is a constant source of embarrassment to their respective parties come election time. Alex Salmond is honouring an election pledge to hold a Referendum on independence, a rarity for any political party which promises referendums and then welches on them. We, who are of Scottish blood but live in England, were not allowed a vote on devolution, but those of English origin and living in Scotland were and the vote was carried on a minority of 44 per cent. No doubt the same will happen when the Referendum on Independence comes about.

My advice to Cameron, Clegg and Milliband is keep out of Scottish affairs.

REG SEGGER, Swinforse Way, Swindon

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Rapturous rapper



Benjamin Blake proving his critics wrong

STOURBRIDGE student and rapper Bb has reached the regional finals of a national competition. Two years ago, Bb – real name Benjamin Blake – was advised by the music press to give up after failing to pass the auditions in another competition. But last year he was runner-up in Talent UK and is now in the Live & Unsigned quarter-finals.

"I'm very excited about it," said Bb, aged 20, of Smith Street, Kates Hill, Dudley, a graphic design student at Stourbridge College. The regional finals will be at the NEC on March 24. Tickets must be bought from Bb via Facebook, Twitter: @ThatBrumKid or by on 07506 100790.

thechronicle

Care home talks on four options

FOUR options for the future of a closure-threatened care home in Kingswinford are to be discussed.

Residents, their families and staff are being asked for their views on New Bradley Hall, Compton Drive.

It had been earmarked for closure under plans by Dudley Council to shut a number of homes by 2014.

But more than 5,000 people have signed petitions protesting against the proposals announced last year.

About 30 residents, some of whom are over 90, face being moved.

A consultation has now been launched and will be conducted by pensioners' charity Age UK Dudley.

The four options include the council-run care home, which has 31 beds, remaining open to existing and future residents. Another possi-

bility is that the home is sold off as a going concern to a private company.

A third option is for it to stay open to its long-term residents only while still providing limited short-term care.

The final choice would see it close, the residents moved to other centres and the funding reinvested into providing care at home and extra care housing.

Open

As well as the four options, the council could consider any other suggestion that comes out of the consultation.

Dudley Council's adult social care chief Councillor David Vickers said: "No final decision on the options have been made.

"The council is open to considering any alternative option that meets the demand for older people's services now and in the future."

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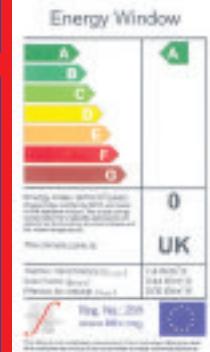
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Job joy at new store

A BRANCH of Screwfix has opened in Stourbridge, creating 12 jobs.

The store, which caters for the building trade, is on the Stourbridge Estate in Mill Race Lane. It will be the firm's 210th trade counter shop, providing tradesmen with access to 18,000 tools, accessories and hardware products.

Branch manager Mark Moore said: "This is our first branch in Stourbridge and it is great news, creating 12 jobs." The firm has bases in Birmingham, New Road, Dudley and Worcester Road, Kidderminster.

Fight for Hippodrome

HUNDREDS of people have joined a campaign spearheaded by a Stourbridge group to save The Hippodrome – which stands on a gateway into Dudley – from demolition.

More than 300 signatures have been collected in a bid to preserve the old Dudley council-owned theatre in Castle Hill and help restore the complex.

The building stands empty and the authority has said it may be torn down to make way for a museum or community centre.

But campaigners want the site to be reopened as a theatre and say it could help to lure thousands of visitors to the town. A petition has been started by

enthusiasts Geoff Fitzpatrick and Malcolm Palmer in the hope of saving it.

Mr Palmer, aged 76, runs the Stourbridge branch of the George Formby Society and the theatre holds a special significance for fans.

Formby performed at the venue and in his stay at the nearby Station Hotel he did an impromptu sing-along with the fans below from his balcony.

Great

Former college lecturer Mr Fitzpatrick who lived near the theatre in Bourne Street when he was growing up, said: "The Hippodrome was around when Dudley was the hub of the Black Country. We think that different community groups could use it – how great would it be for theatre groups to be

able to hold performances there?" Mr Fitzpatrick, aged 70, has collected around 300 signatures in Halesowen.

But council leader Les Jones said it had "already failed once" as a theatre and added the nearby Dudley Concert Hall was now the town's main live entertainment venue.

He said he feared that after so long on the market, there was simply no interest in the building. "Initial ideas being mooted are for a museum or other kind of visitor attraction, but a building for community use is also being considered," he said.

"The basic facade of the existing building is attractive but it has stood derelict for too long now and something needs to be done with it."

Library move looks set to go-head despite fears

PLANS to move Netherton Library which has been housed in an arts centre for more than a century to a new venue look set to be approved – despite fears from councillors.

It has been at Netherton Arts Centre but now Dudley Council wants to put on another site as it tries to make the service more efficient and save cash.

A consultation with residents, businesses and councillors was held at the end of last year. Now council bosses say they are pressing ahead with the plans. A final decision will be made by the cabinet in March.

The council wants to move the library to The Savoy Centre. Cabinet member Councillor Adrian Turner has previously said the move had been mooted to not only save money but to improve access to the library,

which is difficult for disabled people and mothers with pushchairs to enter.

But the plans have sparked fears it could spell the beginning of the end for the centre. It suffered a blow last year after the council slashed the budget of Dudley Performing Arts, which operates the building, by £469,000 – about half.

Councillor Qadar Zada said: "I've had lots of people approach me raising their concerns about this historic building. The library at the current site is very popular.

"I'd much rather money was spent on resolving any issues with the current building than using this as an opportunity to move closer to abandoning the site.

"My worst fears are the building will be sold off as a pub."

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Roy, 69, won't hear of not competing



Roy Norton prepares for the world table tennis championships for the deaf in Tokyo, Japan

TO MANY sporting types discovering you are going deaf could put a real dampner on your ambitions but not so for one Dudley table tennis player.

After discovering his hearing was deteriorating, veteran player Roy Norton, aged 69, was tested at Specsavers in Stourbridge, which confirmed his hearing loss was at 65 per cent.

However, instead of fearing the worst and hanging up his paddle for good he seized the opportunity for a fresh challenge when he realised he was now eligible to play in an international contest.

So Mr Norton, will be soon be jetting more than 6,000 miles to Tokyo to take part in the world table tennis championships for deaf athletes as part of the Deaflympics.

Mr Norton, who still plays for the Victoria Park club in Walsall, has been playing as a hobby for more than 50 years accumulating around 400 medals.

"It will be another experience for me but I like competing and decided to give it a go," said the former factory owner.

Mr Norton, of Charnwood Close, Brierley Hill, usually relies on a hearing aid in competitions including the World Veteran Championships.

But competition rules stipulate this is not allowed meaning a whole new training plan before the event starting in April. The Deaflympics is organised by The International Committee of Sports for the Deaf.

Call for businesses to sign up to code

BUSINESSES in the Dudley borough which employ teenagers are being encouraged to sign up to a new code to ensure their workers are being treated properly.

Employers can sign up, free, to the new code of practice which aims to ensure young people are happy, safe and protected at work.

The code, developed by the council's education investigation service (EIS), includes guidance on legal requirements, health and safety, safeguarding and suitable equipment.

Businesses that sign up will receive visits from the council to ensure they are following the code correctly.

Families can ask businesses if they have signed up to the code, and all employers who do so will be recognised with a certificate they will be asked to display.

For more information about child employment, contact the EIS team on 01384 814310 or visit www.dudley.gov.uk and search for the education investigation service.

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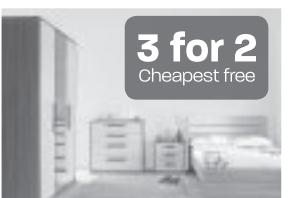
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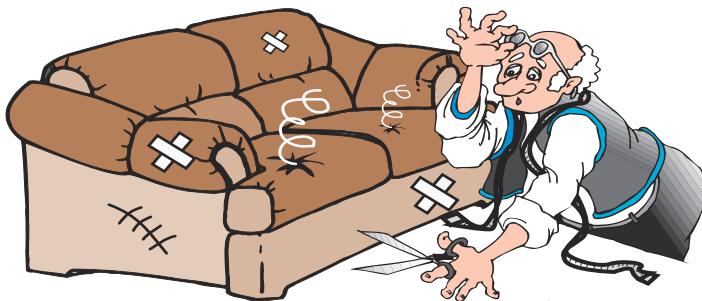
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£250,000 repair bill for collapse-risk headstones

AROUND £250,000 has been spent repairing unsafe gravestones and memorials in Dudley borough that have failed "topple tests".

So far 13,500 memorials have been checked. Of those, 2,680 have needed attention because they were at risk of collapse.

The headstones are tested by hand, following strict guidelines, and relatives are kept informed of any work that is needed.

Headstones that wobble have had to be shored up to prevent them falling over.

Council workers have been carrying out a rolling programme of checks and repairs in the borough since 2007 with £250,000 being spent over the five-year period.

Work has already been carried out at Stourbridge, Gornal Wood and Dudley but checks are now being carried out at Cradley Cemetery before moving on to Lye and Wollscote in the next few months.

Councillor David Stanley, cabinet member for environment and culture, said: "This work continues to be carried out very sensitively and our staff are always available to speak to families directly should they wish to do so."

It is hoped that all lawn memorials will be inspected and made safe within the borough's seven cemeteries in the next two to three years. The council allocates around £70,000 a year to fund repair work.

Memorials that fail the test are made safe by the introduction of a new base slab and installation of a ground anchor through it.

Walk for cancer charity

RESIDENTS are being invited to take part in an annual sponsored walk to raise cash for cancer charities in the Black Country. The Rainbow Breast Reconstruction group has organised the event, which will take place at Bodenham Arboretum, Wolverley, on April 10. To take part call Dudley Cancer Support on 01384 231232 or organiser Denise Hudson on 01384 393077.

Pot potential for plant



Tracey Wakeman, of Halesowen, with her bird of paradise plant

AT LAST - here's a bird of paradise plant which is blooming beautifully every year.

Tracey Wakeman got in touch after two readers spoke of their frustrations at failing to get it to flower.

She bought it from a Spanish airport on her way home from a holiday 13 years ago.

At the time it was only small but has grown to more than 6ft tall and flowers every year with orange and purple blooms.

Tracey, aged 47 from Halesowen, said the secret was to ensure the plant was placed in a large enough pot.

Cooler

"Also, I only water the plant when it really needs it," she said.

"My plant is placed in a conservatory so in the summer it gets a lot of warmth and in the winter it is cooler."

Roy Wood, of Cox Road, Coseley, said it was also important to ensure the plant had suitable nutrients.

Roy, 74, who once worked at Blakedowns nursery, Bridgnorth, said: "Using something like potash in the soil can get a plant to bloom."

"Placing items such as banana skins in the soil can also provide nutrition."

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thechronicle

Businesses get call to put freight onto canals

A NEW group trying to raise the profile of the Midland canal network is hoping to encourage businesses to transport freight on the region's waterways instead of the roads.

The idea is among options being considered, according to a prominent businessman leading West Midlands Waterways Partnership.

The group is chaired by Peter Mathews, of the Black Country Consortium and managing director of Black Country Metals in Lye.

One aim is to get more people involved in looking after canals and rivers.

The group will also work out how the region's waterways should operate.

Mr Mathews said the move would raise the profile of the waterways, pumping in more cash for renovation and maintenance schemes.

He wants businesses to consider the waterways as an alternative for transporting goods.

"We really need to show not just the history on our doorstep but the fact we have a valuable asset that can be used for pleasure

and, potentially, for the good of the economy," said Mr Mathews.

"I think you could see more businesses using the waterways and over the next five years there will be more commercial use of the canals."

Narrowboat enthusiast Graham Fisher, MBE, a former chairman of Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Society, has been invited to join the group.

He said people needed to look at ways the canal and river network could make money in order to survive.

"We have to look at innovation to allow ways of developing the waterways for the 21st century," he said.

The creation of mobile phone applications to provide interactive maps for the network is being considered.

Art in the abstract



Artists Margaret Pritchard, left and Janet Glazier

ABSTRACT art is the theme for an exhibition at Dudley Museum and Art Gallery. Transformations, by artists Janet Glazier and Margaret Pritchard, features abstract and semi-abstract paintings based on photographs of natural forms.

About 24 pictures and the photographs that inspired them are on display. Dudley Council's culture chief Councillor David Stanley said: "This is a beautiful and innovative exhibition. The two artists have taken everyday images and transformed them into something truly unique."

The free exhibition runs until April 14, Monday to Saturday from 10am to 4pm with free admission.

Exploring on the Edge

CHILDREN can get out and about at beauty spot Kinver Edge this month. The National Trust host hour-long woodland adventure walks at Kinver Edge today (Thursday, February 16) from 11am and again at 1pm. Places cost £2 per child. Call (01562) 712 822. There is also a three-hour guided ramble from 10am on Sunday (£2).



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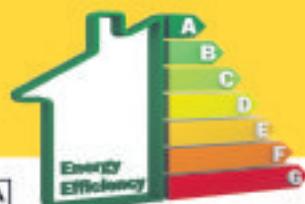


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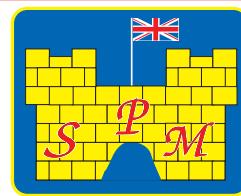
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thechronicle

Boss of 99p shop stole £19,000

A SHOP manager who stole more than £19,000 takings from his branch of 99p Stores and then blew it at a casino has been jailed and now faces deportation.

Vishnu Amuram, manager at the shop in Halesowen, received a 12-month prison term and faces being sent back to his native India once he completes it.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard last week that the 32-year-old had sole responsibility for running the store in Cornbow Centre. Among his duties was bagging up the takings at the end

of the day and placing the money in a secure location.

But over four days last December, Amuram had instead pocketed the cash and used it to gamble on the roulette table at a casino.

Admit

He lost all of the cash – a total of £19,240 – apart from £525 which was recovered after he admitted his deception.

Miss Helena Miller, prosecuting, said Amuram, of Aldridge Road, Perry Barr, had contacted his area manager on the

morning of December 19 to admit what he had done.

Amuram said he had gambled the money away at a casino and admitted he had a gambling problem.

Mr Ayoub Khan, defending, said: "He has been candid throughout the proceedings. He pleaded guilty at the first opportunity and admits he has a gambling problem."

He said Amuram, who pleaded guilty to theft, had also claimed he had been trying to raise money to pay for an operation needed by his sister.

Police map out the areas where criminals strike

MAPS released by the Home Office reveal for the first time crime hotspots in the region.

The move is part of plans by the Government to give the public direct access to crime figures and follows the success of its crime-mapping website.

The maps allow for a more accurate picture of crime on the streets of our towns and cities than ever before.

But while the Government is happy to identify streets where the crimes take place, it has stopped short of naming specific venues or locations in case victims of crime are inadvertently identified to the wider public.

An analysis of the mapping system for December shows that the main shopping areas throughout the Black Country chalk-up numerous offences.

Shops around the Merry Hill Shopping Centre racked up more than 40 reported shoplifting offences in December.

In Worsley there were 36 recorded crimes, the majority of which were anti-social behaviour incidents.

There were two thefts in the High Street, near to the Crystal Ball Restaurant. That area consists of a number of businesses.

There were a further two reports of anti-social behaviour and shoplifting near to Worsley Green Library.

The area has faced long-running issues with anti-social behaviour, particularly in the summer.

Funding is being sought to install a park keeper at the King George V Park, which has been blighted by vandalism for years.

Tackling metal theft is currently one of the main priorities for police in the area.

Faced

Closer to the centre of Dudley in Pennett, there were 108 crimes in December. There were 11 crimes on or near the Aldi and B&M stores in Dudley Road near Worsley.

Meanwhile, around Russells Hall Hospital, there were nine crimes made up of six thefts, two anti-social behaviour incidents and one burglary.

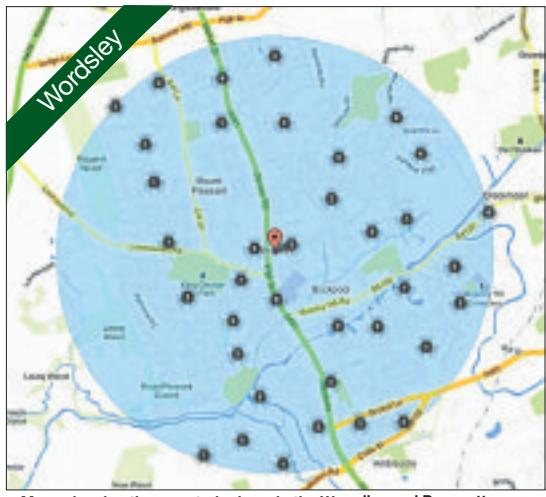
The area has faced particular problems with metal thieves targeting catalytic converters from vehicles.

Police are focusing on scrap merchants who may be receiving the stolen goods.

The maps overall reveal there is also a lot of crime in and around areas that contain high numbers of pubs and bars within a relatively small area.

But there are concerns that because the specific locations of incidents are not given, it could tarnish the reputation of some businesses in areas where crime has been committed.

Since October, the public has been able to look at the www.police.uk website to find out about crime in their



Maps showing the reported crimes in the Worsley and Pennett areas



neighbourhoods. The latest development highlights crime near public places while later this year, the website will include information about what happens after a crime has taken place and the police are investigating.

Home Secretary Theresa May said the Government was "giving the public more information than ever before about crime and policing in their area through street-level crime maps".

By May, the crime maps will show the public what happens after a crime has occurred, including what action the police took and what the criminal justice outcome was.

DETECTIVES are appealing for help in tracing two young people following a burglary in Brierley Hill. Thieves smashed a glass door panel of a house in Brockmoor High Street and stole a laptop. Police are looking for two young people seen on CCTV nearby. Dr Karen Trinder, of Dudley CID, said: "One was a boy and both had the lower parts of their face covered." Anyone with information can call Brierley Hill police station on 0345 113 5000 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Wedding day incentive

A COUPLE have a chance to win £300 towards their wedding cost by visiting Dudley's Priory Hall register office. Dudley Council is offering one couple the chance to have their wedding fee waived at the venue through a free prize draw at the open day event from 10am on March 10. The draw will be made by the Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Michael Evans, at 3pm at Priory Hall. The winning couple will still be required to pay the statutory notice fee of £33.50 each at their local register office.

Plea for help of burglary

DETECTIVES are appealing for help in tracing two young people following a burglary in Brierley Hill. Thieves smashed a glass door panel of a house in Brockmoor High Street and stole a laptop. Police are looking for two young people seen on CCTV nearby. Dr Karen Trinder, of Dudley CID, said: "One was a boy and both had the lower parts of their face covered." Anyone with information can call Brierley Hill police station on 0345 113 5000 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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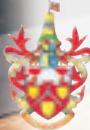
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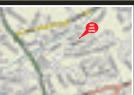
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COMMERCIAL FEATURE

We all go Gaga for chips - the nation's favourite



Crinkle-cut chips with coronation chicken



Spicy wedges served with an avocado dip

of more than 26,000 British Grand Prix races. Chris Verschueren, of Kastel, Belgium, holds the world record for the longest French fries cooking marathon. He cooked for 83 hours, serving 15,000 portions of chips.

Or the record number of chip portions sold in a fish and chip shop in one day was 4,000?

The



chips eaten in Britain each year come from potatoes weighing the equivalent of nearly 2.9 million Formula 1 cars.

Laid end to end, those

chips would take you around the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit more than 1.5 million times - that's the equivalent

of more than 26,000 British Grand Prix races. Chris Verschueren, of Kastel, Belgium, holds the world record for the longest French fries cooking marathon. He cooked for 83 hours, serving 15,000 portions of chips.

And even pop diva Lady Gaga is a chip fan. She recently made a late night stop with her tour bus for fish and chips in Marylebone, London. The bus wasn't able to fit outside the chip shop so her security team went to pick up the take-away while a suitable parking spot was found.

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Council tax frozen with warning of rise to come

Our hands are tied say councillors as rents go up 7.7pc

COUNCIL chiefs in Dudley have admitted a 7.7 per cent rise in rents is too steep – but gave the go-ahead after claiming their “hands were tied”.

It is the biggest increase in almost a decade for residents living in the borough's 24,000 council homes and is the equivalent of £5.54 per week extra for tenants.

The council's cabinet last week approved the plans and said the new charges were calculated using the Government's formula.

But opposition Labour councillor Gaye Partridge called the hike “obscene”.

“Taking this amount of extra cash from some families' income could leave them in real trouble,” she said.

The council's housing boss Councillor Adrian Turner said: “I don't believe the increase is fair and I realise that a lot of people will be hit by these prices but our hands were tied.”

He said the increase would fund work on bringing the more than 400 empty council properties back into use to reduce the



Councillor Adrian Turner waiting list of 6,000 people. Council leader Les Jones said making the increase two per cent lower would have cost the authority more than £4 million.

He added: “It is a great shame that we are looking at this but it is done using a formula imposed by the Government.”

“The plans will go before full council next month. Some £22 million of



Councillor Les Jones budget savings have been made in Dudley in the past year.

Council chiefs approved proposals to save a further £7.5 million in 2012/13 rising to £13 million by 2014/15.

However, the authority has already launched the second year of a redundancy programme which will see around 200 positions go by April 2013.

Councillor Jones said: “We have shown over the past year that compulsory redundancies have been the last resort and we will continue to reduce staffing numbers where necessary.”

“The plans will go before full council next month. Some £22 million of



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CARLISLE: A lunchtime break of up to around 2 hours is expected at Carlisle. You may choose to stroll between the castle, cathedral or indeed the Tullie House Museum – all of which are surrounded by great places to shop, eat or drink. The beauty of Carlisle is that most of the main area of the city is within walking distance of its rail station making it an ideal destination for most visitors.

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The total is made up to 20 with *Man In The Middle*, a tribute to the late Maurice Gibb, *Islands In The Stream* and the demo version of *Immortality*, which they have in the memory of being pop legends.

Goldfrapp - The Singles
FROM the dramatic *Lovely Head* to the stomping *Ooh La La*, the breathy vocals of Alison Goldfrapp and synth-strings of Will Gregory have over five albums injected a welcome dose of glam and disco into the music scene with the duo's distinctive sexy synthetic pop sound.

Includes two new tracks, *Yellow Halo* and *Melancholy Sky*.

Django Django

ENTERTAINING debut album from a Scottish outfit that pretty much defines 'quirky'. They draw upon spaghetti western themes and video game jingles as much as surf music and West Coast psychedelic pop, the latter evident on the Buffalo Springfield-like *Hand of Man*. Contemporary kindred spirits would include Beck and The Beta Band.

Hobson's Choice for fans of ballet with so much on

SPRING has come early for ballet fans with the start of Birmingham Royal Ballet's new season at Birmingham Hippodrome in a fortnight that is rich in high quality dance.

Comic yet poignant ballet Hobson's Choice, set in Victorian times, tells the rags to riches story of boot-maker Will Mossop, with a lot of help from the iron-willed Maggie Hobson. It was a breakthrough creation in 1989 for David Bintley, who is now the BRB's director. The revival is staged from Wednesday, February 22, to February 25.

The following week the same company present a brace under the title Spring Passions. It is a Frederick Ashton choreographed double bill with the Greek myth of Daphnis and Chloe plus romantic classic *The Two Pigeons*. They are staged from February 29 to March 3.

The BRB's return to their home city begins on Friday, February 17, with An Evening of Song and Dance at the Symphony Hall featuring excerpts from the company's repertoire presented by David Bintley and performed by principal dancers including Nao Sakuma, Iain Mackay, Elisha Willis and Jamie Bond. The Royal Ballet Sinfonia

will also perform a selection of favourite ballet music.

The Russian State Ballet and Orchestra of Siberia are at Wolverhampton Grand from Monday with a different ballet each evening over three days. They start with delightful rural tale *La Fille Mal Gardee*, featuring the famous clog dance; the classic *Swan Lake* on Tuesday; and the spectacular *Sleeping Beauty* on Wednesday.

Dance is brought up to date with the dynamic *BalletBoyz* at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham for one night only on

Deloris is simply divine

Sister Act, Wolverhampton Grand

DIAMANTE-studded nuns happy clapping to a disco beat... what's not to like about the silly but warm-hearted musical Sister Act.

Based on Whoopi Goldberg's 20-year-old comedy movie and more recent West End blockbuster, this joyous tale about a 1970s soul singer who finds refuge from a gangster in the cloisters of a convent had the audience laughing and clapping along.

Only the most po-faced puritan could argue with the show's feel-good vibe and witty songs from chief Disney songwriters Menken and Slater. And young Rada graduate Cynthia Erivo is a revelation in the starring role of soul sister Deloris Van Cartier, with former Coronation Street actress Denise Black a formidable opponent as the Mother Superior.

Sister Act is at the Grand to Saturday.

Leon Burakowski



Cynthia Erivo as the funky fake nun

New take on dance classic

Matthew Bourne's The Nutcracker, Birmingham Hippodrome

THIS is The Nutcracker but not as you would probably know it, for this is Matthew Bourne's version.

Forget the traditional elements of the classic ballet – apart from Tchaikovsky's music – and enjoy the more contemporary version which enthralled the packed Birmingham Hippodrome.

Billed as one of the most dazzling and imaginative productions ever staged, it lived up to its reputation – combining wit with magical fantasy. It takes you on a journey with young girl Clara from a bleak Christmas Eve in an orphanage through an ice skating wonderland to the candy kingdom.

Different, yet but this version, like the more traditional version, features wonderful costumes – the Knickerbocker Glories and Marshmallow Girls in Sweetieiland are superb and, above all, brilliant dancing.

Musical help for hospice

GAY anthem I Am What I Am features in the hit musical *La Cage Aux Folles*, being staged by Pro-Am Productions at Wolverhampton Grand with the aim of raising the final £5,000 and more towards a private suite at Compton Hospice.

Pro Am Productions, which teams professional performers with local amateurs, is run by Jeremy Hobbs, deputy chairman to the board of trustees at Compton Hospice and a member of The Rotary Club of Wolverhampton.

The show about a gay couple who must play straight when one of them has to impress his son's prospective in-laws will star Tony O'Rourke as outrageous drag queen Zaza and his alter-ego Albin.

It will be staged four times over three days at the Lichfield Street venue from Thursday, February 23. Tickets are £15.50 to £21.50 with concessions available. Contact the box office on 01902 429212 or www.grandtheatre.co.uk

Sisters at war

The Worst Thing About My Sister - Jacqueline Wilson

SISTERS fight like cat and dog when forced to share a bedroom in the new hardback from the former Children's Laureate. Then an accident makes tomboy Marty examine how she feels about her big sister. For readers aged 11 and under.

Table talk

A POOL table is the main prop in former taxi driver Ishy Din's first play, *Snookered*, being staged at Wolverhampton's Arena Theatre on February 21 and 22.

Tensions mount when four men meet to mark the sixth anniversary of their friend's death with a few drinks and a game of pool, in a hard-hitting story from the Middlesbrough writer.

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Mark Kermode knows a lot about films. So if he says somebody should have won an award for their performance in a particular movie, you'd better sit up and take notice. He's about to do just that when he hosts this year's Kermode Awards, which celebrate films and actors overlooked by the Oscars. Andrew Graham-Dixon journeys north of the border to review the National Theatre of Scotland's Appointment with The Wicker Man, and, as Tate Britain opens its new exhibition Picasso and Modern British Art, Alastair Sooke investigates the Spaniard's relationship with surrealist Roland Penrose.

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.35 Rachel Allen: Home Cooking. (R) 12.00 BBC News; Regional News; Weather. 12.15 Football Focus. 1.00 Live Athletics. 4.30 Final Score. 5.10 A Question of Sport. (R) 5.40 BBC News; Regional News; Weather.

6.00 Winter Wipeout. Former champions and losing finalists tackle the course, including Babyface Baz, Wheely Dan, Alaca-Dan and Suspicious Helen. Presented by Richard Hammond and Amanda Byram.

7.00 Let's Dance for Sport Relief. New series. Shooting Stars duo Ulrika Jonsson and Angelos Epithemiou, DJs Tony Blackburn and David Hamilton, and cricket star Darren Gough compete in the charity dance show.

8.20 The National Lottery: Who Dares Wins. Game show hosted by Nick Knowles in which two pairs of complete strangers team up, each battling to outdo the other by listing as much as they know about a given subject.

9.10 Casualty. Dixie is suspicious of a new paramedic.

10.00 BBC News; Weather. 10.20 FILM: Starsky & Hutch. (2004) Comedy, starring Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson; National Lottery Update.

11.55 The Football League Show. Manish Bhasin presents highlights of today's games.

1.10 Weatherview. 1.15 BBC News.

6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 12.00 The Sky at Night. (R) 12.20 Film: Houseguest. (1995) Comedy, starring Sinbad and Phil Hartman. 2.05 Film: A Good Woman. (2004) Comedy drama, starring Helen Hunt. 3.30 Birds Britannia. 4.30 Flog It! (R) 5.30 Dad's Army. (R)

6.00 The Culture Show. Andrew Graham-Dixon reviews the National Theatre of Scotland's adaptation of The Wicker Man, and Mark Kermode presents his own awards for the past year's films.

7.00 Live Cycling. Jake Humphrey presents coverage of the second day of the fourth and final round of the Track Cycling World Cup Classics season, staged at the Olympic Velodrome in London.

9.00 Lucian Freud: Painted Life. The career of painter Lucian Freud, who died in July, telling the story of a complex man who refused to go with the flow, only achieving celebrity in older age.

10.30 I Have I Got a Bit More News for You. With guest Jack Dee. (R)

11.15 Pan Am. Ginny follows Dean to Rome.

11.55 FILM: Bull Durham. (1988) A baseball groupie is torn between a grizzled veteran and a talented but dim-witted newcomer for her next lover. Comedy drama, with Kevin Costner, Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins.

1.40 The Culture Show.

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6.00 Milkshake! 10.00 Demolition: The Tallest Tower. (R) 11.00 Royal Navy: Caribbean Patrol. (R) 12.00 Film: Al Jennings of Oklahoma. (1951) Western, with Dan Duryea. 1.30 Film: Gunsmoke. (1953) Western, starring Audie Murphy. 3.05 Film: King of Kings. (1961) Drama, starring Jeffrey Hunter.

6.15 5 News Weekend. 6.20 NCIS. Ducky is attacked by a knife-wielding woman who accuses him of war crimes, alleging he tortured and killed her brother in Afghanistan in the early 1980s. (R)

7.10 NCIS. The agents investigate the private life of a murdered Navy captain. (R)

8.00 NCIS. Inquiries into the death of a Marine land the team squarely in the middle of an inner-city gang war, forcing Gibbs to confront a secret from his past. (R)

9.00 CSI: NY. Danny risks his career when he is knocked unconscious in a bar brawl and comes round to discover an undercover officer has shot his assailant dead.

9.55 Live Boxing. Kid Galahad vs Jason Booth. Coverage of the bout for the vacant WBC International Super Bantamweight title at the Magna Centre in Rotherham.

11.30 True Grit: The True Story. (R)

12.30 SuperCasino. 4.00 Nick's Quest. (R) 4.25 Divine Designs. (R) 4.50 Rough Guide to Islands. (R) 5.00 Hanz's Helpline. (R) 5.10 The Milkshake! Show. (R) 5.35 Thomas & Friends. (R) 5.45 Roary the Racing Car. (R)

2.45 American Idol 4.50 Film: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) 7.05 Film: Twins (1988). Comedy adventure, with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito. 9.20 Take Me Out – The Gossip 10.05 Celebrity Juice 10.50 Film: The Island (2005)

2.10 Film: Columbo: Murder with Too Many Notes (2000) 4.05 Agatha Christie's Marple 6.00 Agatha Christie's Poirot 8.00 Doc Martin 9.00 Agatha Christie's Poirot 11.00 Film: Dead Calm (1989). Suspense thriller, with Sam Neill, Nicole Kidman and Billy Zane.

3.20 Film: The Man from the Alamo (1953) 5.00 Film: The Far Country (1954) 7.00 The Sweeney 8.00 Minder 9.00 Film: Jaws 3 (1983) Thriller sequel, starring Dennis Quaid. 11.00 Film: Scarface (1983)

BBC THREE 7.00 Doctor Who 8.30 Top Gear 9.35 Live at the Apollo 10.50 Family Guy 11.35 American Dad!

BBC FOUR 7.00 Decisive Weapons 8.00 Sinatra Sings 9.00 Inspector Montalbano 10.45 Storyville: The Jazz Baroness

E4 1.45 Hollyoaks 4.20 Perfect Couples 5.15 Scrubs 6.10 The Big Bang Theory 7.05 Happy Endings 7.35 How I Met Your Mother 8.05 Rules of Engagement 8.35 The Big Bang Theory 9.00 Film: Epic Movie (2007). Fantasy spoof, starring Kal Penn and Adam Campbell.

10.40 World's Greatest Celebrity Body Shockers 11.50 The Big Bang Theory

FILM 2.55 Timeline (2003) 5.05 Faintheart (2008) 6.50 Planet of the Apes (1968). Sci-fi drama, starring Charlton Heston and Roddy McDowall.

9.00 Max Payne (2008) Action thriller, starring Mark Wahlberg. 11.00 Thirst (2009)

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HOMELAND

Channel 4, 9.30pm

Whenever a hit US series receives acclaim, it always seems to be snapped up by Sky for broadcast, usually, on its Atlantic channel. So it's a nice surprise to see Channel 4 nipping in to nab Homeland from under its big-spending rival's nose. Like *In Treatment*, this is based on an Israeli series. It focuses on the idea of what might happen if an US serviceman returned home after seeing action, having become convinced that the terrorists he was sent to find were right after all. The opening episode introduces viewers to Carrie Mathison, a CIA operations officer who's received a tip-off from a contact in Afghanistan about a soldier who has been turned into a sleeper agent by al-Qaeda.



6.00 Breakfast. 9.00 The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Country Tracks; (R) Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.00** Sunday Politics. **1.00** EastEnders. **2.50** Penguin Island. (R) **3.20** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.20** Lifeline. **4.30** Songs of Praise. **5.05** Polar Bear: Spy on the Ice. (R)

6.05 BBC News; Regional News; Weather.

6.30 Countryfile. Ellie Harrison looks back on previous reports, from orienteering in the Lake District's unspoilt spaces, to Julia Bradbury's travels along the River Wye. Starring Weather for the Week Ahead.

7.30 Antiques Roadshow. The team returns to Hartland Abbey, Devon, where items of interest include a quilt believed to be made from ballgowns worn in the royal household and a rare piece of glass.

8.30 Call the Midwife. Sister Monica Joan is accused of theft. Last in the series.

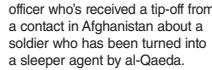
9.30 Upstairs Downstairs. New series. Sir Hallam becomes preoccupied with Nazi Germany.

10.30 BBC News; Regional News; Weather.

10.55 Room 101 – Extra Storage. With Alistair McGowan, Hilary Devey and Josh Groban.

11.35 The Celebrity Apprentice USA.

1.05 Weatherview. 1.10 Sign Zone: Film 2012, with Claudia Winkleman. (R) **1.50** Holby City. (R) **2.50** Celebrity Antiques Road Trip. (R) **3.50** BBC News.



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6.00 Beebries. **7.00** CBBC. **10.00** Something for the Weekend. **11.30** Film: The Burning Hills. (1956) Western, starring Tab Hunter. (R) **1.00** Film: The Gumball Rally. (1976) Car-race comedy, starring Michael Sarrazin. **2.45** Live Cycling. The final day of the Track Cycling World Cup Classics season from London.

6.00 Ski Sunday. The women's World Cup downhill race from Sochi in Russia.

6.45 Coast. The north-west coast of Ireland.

7.00 World's Most Dangerous Roads. Celebrities undertake journeys on some of the most perilous routes in the world. In Alaska, Sue Perkins and Charley Boorman drive along the notorious Dalton Highway. (R)

8.00 Top Gear. With Hollywood actor Michael Fassbender.

9.00 Swimming with Crocodiles – Botswana. Part one of two. Ben Fogle joins a pilot research study of Nile crocodiles in Botswana.

10.00 Three Men in a Boat: The Best Bits. A compilation of highlights from the series.

11.00 Ski Sunday. The women's World Cup downhill race from Sochi in Russia. (R)

11.45 Frank Skinner's Opinionated Russell Howard joins the presenter in Norwich. (R)

12.15 Film: Southern Comfort. (1981) Action thriller, starring Powers Boothe. **2.00** BBC News. **3.50** Close.

6.00 CITV: Mini CITV. **7.25** CITV. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** FA Cup Football Highlights. (R) **10.30** Dinner Date. (R) **11.30** Dickinson's Real Deal. **12.30** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **1.30** ITV News: Weather. **1.35** Live FA Cup Football. **4.45** All Star Family Fortunes. (R) **5.30** Regional News; Weather. **5.50** ITV News: Weather.

6.05 Dancing on Ice. The nine remaining celebrities battle it out.

8.00 Coronation Street.

Lewis returns to the Street and pays back the cash he stole.

8.30 Wild at Heart. Ed is left

in charge of the endangered-species project at the clinic, where he meets a beautiful stranger who takes an interest in him – but Du Plessis is suspicious of her motives.

9.30 Dancing on Ice: The Skate Off. The results are announced and viewers find out which of the nine celebrities will be leaving the competition for good.

Presented by Phillip Schofield and Christine Bleakley.

10.00 That Sunday Night Show. With Frank Skinner and John Prescott.

10.45 FA Cup Football Highlights. Including action from Crawley Town v Stoke City.

11.45 Premiership Rugby Union.

12.40 The Zone; ITV News Headlines. **2.10** River Monsters. (R) **3.00** ITV Nightscreeen. **5.30** ITV Morning News.

6.15 The Hoobs. (R) **6.40** The Hoobs. (R) **7.05** That Paralympic Show. (R) **7.30** Channel 4 Presents – 2012: Helen Turner. (R) **7.35** Sailing: America's Cup Uncovered. (R) **8.05** T4: One Tree Hill. (R) **9.00** T4: Countdown to the NME Awards 2012. (R) **9.20** T4: Bourjois Boutique. **9.25** T4: Bourjois Boutique. **12.00** T4: The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.30** T4: The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** Film: Mighty Joe Young. (1998) Family adventure remake, with Charlize Theron. **3.10** Deal or No Deal. **4.05** Time Team. **5.10** Channel 4 News. **5.40** 4thought. **5.45** The Political Slot. **5.50** Film: Fantastic Mr Fox. (2009) Premiere. Stop-motion animated adventure, with the voice of George Clooney.

7.30 Home of the Future. The Pereras' family MOT business is modernised.

8.30 The Hotel. Manager Mark Jenkins ends the summer season with a barbecue pool party.

9.30 Homeland. New series. A CIA agent suspects a recently rescued American prisoner of war may be working for al-Qaeda. Thriller.

(2008) **2.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **3.20** Rupert Bear. (R) **4.50** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** The Mr Men Show. (R) **9.20** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **9.40** Mist: Sheepdog Tales. (R) **10.00** Grey's Anatomy. (R) **11.00** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.00** Cowboy Builders. (R) **1.00** Film: Murder 101: Locked Room Mystery. (2008) **2.20** Whodunit, starring Dick Van Dyke. **2.45** Film: Starman. (1984) Sci-fi fantasy romance, starring Jeff Bridges. **4.45** Film: Pearl Harbor. (2001) Romantic Second World War drama, with Ben Affleck and Kate Beckinsale.

8.00 Saving Private Ryan: The True Story. (R)

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 FILM: Death Race. (2008) Sci-fi thriller, starring Jason Statham, Joan Allen and Ian McShane.

10.40 FILM: Under Siege 2: Dark Territory. (1995) Adventure, with Steven Seagal, Eric Bogosian, Morris Chestnut, Brenda Bakke and Katherine Heigl.

11.10 FILM: Thirteen Ghosts. (2001) Horror remake, starring Matthew Lillard, Tony Shalhoub and Shannon Elizabeth.

12.40 Inside Hollywood. (2004) Thriller, starring Tom Cruise and Jamie Foxx. **2.45** Film: The Grand Finale. (2006) Premiere. Documentary about the 2006 FIFA World Cup. **4.25** Brothers & Sisters. (R) **5.10** Countdown. (R) **5.55** The Treacle People. (R)

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6.00 Milkshake! Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **6.15** Fifi and the Flowertots. (R) **6.25** Fireman Sam. (R) **6.40** Harry and His Bucket Full of Dinosaurs. (R) **6.50** Castle Farm. (R) **6.55** Igam Ogam. (R) **7.05** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.15** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **7.25** Family! (R) **7.35** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.45** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **7.50** Little Princess. (R) **8.05** The Adventures of Bottie Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. (R) **8.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **8.35** Rupert Bear. (R) **8.50** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** The Mr Men Show. (R) **9.20** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **9.40** Mist: Sheepdog Tales. (R) **10.00** Grey's Anatomy. (R) **11.00** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.00** Cowboy Builders. (R) **1.00** Film: Murder 101: Locked Room Mystery. (2008) **2.20** Whodunit, starring Dick Van Dyke. **2.45** Film: Starman. (1984) Sci-fi fantasy romance, starring Jeff Bridges. **4.45** Film: Pearl Harbor. (2001) Romantic Second World War drama, with Ben Affleck and Kate Beckinsale.

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12.50 SuperCasino. (R) **3.55** Rough Guide to Adventures. (R) **4.10** How Not to Decorate. (R) **5.00** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.10** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.**

Monday

BBC1 6.00 Breakfast. 9.15 Wanted Down Under. (R) 10.00 Homes Under the Hammer; BBC News; Weather. 11.00 Doopster Crime 999. 11.30 Cowboy Trap; BBC News; Weather. 12.15 Regional News; Weather. 1.30 Regional News; Weather. 1.45 Doctors. 2.15 Escape to the Country. 3.00 CBBC News; Weather; Regional News. 3.05 CBBC. 5.15 Pointless. 6.00 BBC News; Weather. 6.30 Regional News Programmes; Weather. 7.00 The One Show. 7.30 Inside Out; BBC News; Regional News. 8.00 EastEnders. 8.30 plebs. 8.45 The Great British Soap. 9.00 Britain's Hidden Alcoholics - Panorama. Presented by Alastair Campbell. 9.00 The Diamond Queen. 10.00 BBC News. 10.25 Regional News; Weather. 10.35 A Question of Sport. 11.05 Late Kick Off. 11.35 The Graham Norton Show. (R) 12.20 The Celebrity Apprentice USA. 1.50 Weatherview. 1.55 Sign Zone; Birdsong. (R) 3.25 Celebrity Antiques Road Trip. (R) 4.25 BBC News.

BBC2 6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 8.30 CBeebies. 11.30 BBC World News. 12.00 Daily Politics. 1.00 Animal Park. (R) 1.30 To Buy or Not to Buy. (R) 2.15 Weakest Link. 3.00 Helicopter Heroes. (R) 3.45 Flog It! (R) 4.30 Perfection. (R) 5.15 Antiques Road Trip. 6.00 Eggheads. 6.30 Britain's Heritage Heroes. 7.00 Operation Hospital Food with James Martin. 8.00 University Challenge. 8.30 The Bleak Old Show of Stuff. 9.00 The Tube. 10.00 Watson & Oliver. 10.30 Newsnight; Weather. 11.20 Pan Am. (R) 12.00 BBC News. 3.15 The Super League Show. 4.00 BBC Learning Zone.

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Channel 4 6.05 Sali Mai. (R) 6.10 The Hoobs. (R) 6.35 The Hoobs. (R) 7.00 Freshly Squeezed. 7.30 According to Jim. 7.55 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.30 Frasier. (R) 9.00 The Secret Millionaire USA. (R) 9.55 Relocation; Relocation; Relocation. (R) 11.00 A Place in the Sun; Winter Sun. 12.00 Channel 4 News Summary. 12.05 Country House Rescue. (R) 1.05 Film; They Who Dare. (1954) Second World War drama, starring Dirk Bogarde. 3.10 Countdown. 4.00 Deal or No Deal. 5.00 Come Dine with Me. 5.30 Coach Trip. 6.00 The Simpsons. (R) 6.30 SuperScrimpers. (R) 6.30 Hollyoaks. 7.00 Channel 4 News. 7.55 4thought.tv. 8.00 Gok's Tees: The Naked Truth. 9.00 Big Gypsy Weddings. 10.00 Shameless. 11.05 Random Acts. 11.10 Desperate Housewives. 12.10 Poker. 1.10 Sailing: America's Cup Uncovered. 1.35 KOTV Kasabian. The Album Chart Show Special. (R) 1.45 Professor Green In Session. 1.50 Come Dine with Me. 2.00 Police Interceptor. (R) 2.55 Come Dine with Me. 3.00 Neighbours. (R) 3.15 Come Dine with Me. 4.00 Weather. 4.15 The Story of the Daytona Challenge. 4.20 That Paralympic Show. (R) 5.10 Road to 2012: Paralympics Extra. New series. A preview of this summer's games.

Channel 5 6.00 Milkshake! 9.15 The Wright Stuff. 11.10 LIVE with Gabby. 12.10 5 News. Lunchtime. 12.15 Build a New Life in the Country. (R) 1.15 Home and Away. 1.45 Neighbours. 2.15 CSI: Miami. (R) 3.15 Film: The View from Here. (2009) Drama, starring Laura Leighton. 5.00 5 News at 5. 5.30 Neighbours. (R) 6.30 5 News at 6. 3.00 Police Interceptor. (R) 6.30 Weather. 6.30 5 News Update. 8.00 Big Body Squad. 5 News at 9. 9.00 Body of Proof. 10.00 CSI: NY. The head of a notorious Puerto Rican gang is killed. (R) 11.00 CSI: Miami. (R) 12.00 CSI: NY. (R) 12.55 SuperCasino. 3.55 House Doctor. (R) 4.20 Wildlife SOS. (R) 5.10 Michaela's Wild Challenge. (R)

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BBC2 6.00 CBeebies. 7.00 CBBC. 8.30 CBeebies. 11.30 BBC World News. 12.00 Daily Politics. 1.00 Animal Park. (R) 1.30 To Buy or Not to Buy. (R) 2.15 Weakest Link. 3.00 Helicopter Heroes. (R) 3.45 Flog It! (R) 4.30 Perfection. (R) 5.15 Antiques Road Trip. 6.00 Eggheads. 6.30 Britain's Heritage Heroes. 7.00 Operation Hospital Food with James Martin. 8.00 University Challenge. 8.30 The Bleak Old Show of Stuff. 9.00 The Tube. 10.00 Watson & Oliver. 10.30 Newsnight; Weather. 11.20 Pan Am. (R) 12.00 BBC News. 3.15 The Super League Show. 4.00 BBC Learning Zone.

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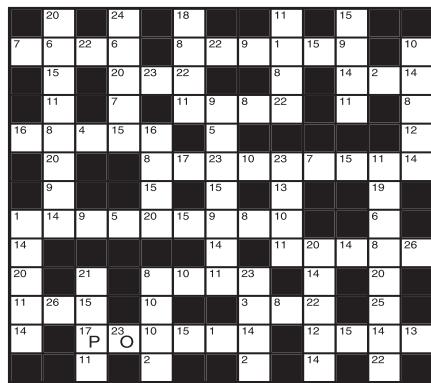
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Brain Gym

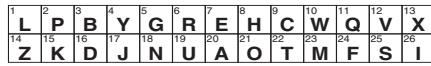
No.156

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:



ALL YOUR PUZZLE NEEDS IN ONE HANDY APP!



OUT NOW!

Seven great games in one!
CRYPTIC CROSSWORD
QUICK CROSSWORD
CODEWORD SUDOKU
WORD PUZZLER
WORD SEARCH
NUMBER CRUNCH

SEARCH: DAILY EXPRESS PUZZLES On the iPhone, iPod Touch & iPad

SEVEN GREAT GAMES IN ONE!



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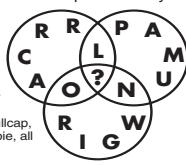
OUT NOW!
ALL YOUR PUZZLE NEEDS
IN ONE HANDY APP!

Circlegram

Replace the question mark with a letter so that the letters within each circle can be arranged to form words on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter represented by the question mark?

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

The letter represented by the question mark is K. Skullcap, bearskin, porcupine, all types of hat.



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Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. A fool holding established financial benefits (6)
2. Leave the vehicle - it's on fire (6)
10. Turn one into an uncharged particle (7)
- 11 & 12. Ac. What those who make spare parts are engaged in? (9)
13. Failed to interest the electorate, we hear of (7)
17. Being stitched together, they could make a mess (5)
18. To signify an intermediate position (4)
22. A practical lesson to be drawn from this sort of victory (5)
23. It's disgusting - so I'm one very upset (7)
- 24 & 9. Drn. Deputy head a very short time in charge (6-2-7)
25. They smooth out level pieces of land, we hear (6)

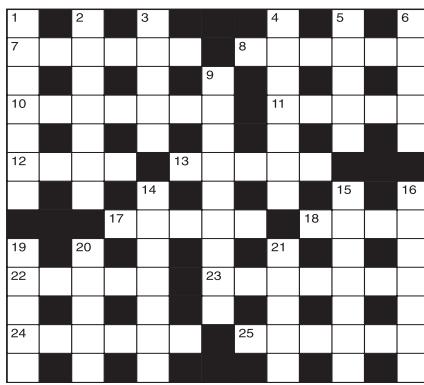
Quick Clues:

Across

7. Sum (6)
8. Whimsical (6)
10. Ogre (7)
11. Handle (5)
12. Sleight (4)
13. Caper (5)
17. Luke-warm (5)
18. Daybreak (4)
22. Perfect (5)
23. Greed (7)
24. Agree (6)
25. Bog (6)

Down

1. Are those who receive it ill-informed? (3,4)
2. Yes, a rut could form this part of the river (7)
- 3 & 14. Dn. Presenting one's relations! (5-7)
4. Footwear for one on a greasy surface (7)
5. Some of the retrogressive monsters (5)
6. It's not the same having to up with the girl (5)
9. See 24 Across
14. See 3 Down
15. What tellers do is check the votes again (7)
16. Prose isn't upside down! (7)
19. A tightly-packed crowd get together (5)
20. This is used for drilling a support (6)
21. Shakespeare's testamentary documents (5)

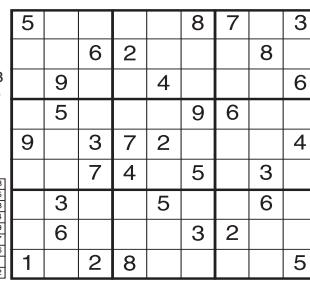


LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Attic; 4 Mutable; 8 Venison; 9 Grief; 10 Rued; 11 Testator; 13 Back; 14 Cedre; 16 Elements; 17 Epic; 20 Eaten; 21 Chasten; 22 Tuesday; 23 Horse. Down: 1 Advertisement; 2 Tense; 3 Cast; 4 Minded; 5 Together; 6 Bristle; 7 Effervescence; 12 Screened; 13 Breath; 15 Sticky; 18 Peter; 19 Dash. QUICK - Across: 1 Rapid; 4 Pretend; 8 Torment; 9 Amass; 10 Over; 11 Infusion; 13 Chop; 14 Stun; 16 Conspire; 17 Tale; 20 Rite; 21 Germane; 22 Element; 23 Wrest. Down: 1 Retrospective; 2 Purse; 3 Deep; 4 Potent; 5 Evacuate; 6 Elation; 7 Disengagement; 12 Complete; 13 Concave; 15 Bright; 18 Adage; 19 Grow.

Sudoku

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >



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WORD PUZZLER
WORD SEARCH
NUMBER CRUNCH

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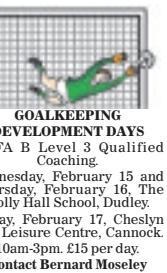
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STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT, 1984
Proposed 40 mph and 50 mph Speed Limits on
A451 Norton Road, Iverley

1. Staffordshire County Council on 16 February 2012 made a Traffic Order under Sections 84(1) and (2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, 1984, to impose 40 mph and 50 mph speed limits on the following lengths of road:

40 MPH SPEED LIMIT

A451 Norton Road, Iverley – from a point 100 metres south-west of the centreline of its junction with Crown Lane in a north-easterly direction to the Dudley/Staffordshire County boundary, a distance of approximately 680 metres.

50 MPH SPEED LIMIT

A451 Norton Road, Iverley – from the Worcestershire/Staffordshire County boundary in a north-easterly direction to a point 100 metres south-west of the centreline of its junction with Crown Lane, a distance of approximately 775 metres.

2. This Order is called the Staffordshire County Council (40 mph and 50 mph Speed Limits) (A451 Norton Road, Iverley) Order 2012.

3. Full details of the Order, together with a map showing the restricted area, may be inspected during normal office hours at the office of the Deputy Chief Executive & Director for Place, 1 Staffordshire Place, Tipping Street, Stafford ST16 2LP, and during normal opening hours at Kinver Library, Vicarage Drive, Kinver.

4. The Order will come into operation on 22 February 2012.

Date: 17 February 2012.

John Tradewell, Director of Law and Democracy,
1 Staffordshire Place, Tipping Street, Stafford ST16 2LP

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Your essential guide to the world of motoring compiled by Motoring Editor Sharon Walters

The Passat CC is a step up in VW's saloon range

ONCE A maker of simple, honest cars, recent years have seen Volkswagen step up its game to be a major player in almost every sector of the market.

The evolutionary process has been a steady one, with the result a constantly expanding line-up of increasingly competent and desirable cars.

A case in point is the Passat CC; a more streamlined and upmarket alternative to the firm's regular Passat saloon.

Viewed by some as a more affordable and less flash Mercedes CLS, the Passat CC's coupe-like profile, refined cabin ambience and mature driving manners earned it a place in the hearts of many seeking to escape the predictability of a conventional three-box saloon. Facelift time has seen a few things added to the car's skill set and one noticeable subtraction: the Passat moniker.

In keeping with the original car's North American naming convention, it's now just Volkswagen CC. Although partly to keep things simple, this is also to help distance the car from its regular Passat cousin. It's hoped buyers will view the car in its own light, and with the subtle exterior design changes make a stronger connection to Volkswagen's flagship Phaeton saloon than the mass market Passat.

It's certainly a clever mind trick and, crucially, one

that works once you clap eyes on the CC's new grille and headlight arrangement – its resemblance to the Phaeton is no coincidence. At the rear there are new taillights and a reshaped bumper but in reality, little else has changed on the outside.

Volkswagen's new focus is on ramping up refinement, which has resulted in improved levels of soundproofing. The aim was to make the already quiet Passat CC even better. The good news is that Volkswagen has succeeded. Despite the CC's posh exterior, its predecessor was a firm favourite with company car drivers, and this car's motorway cruising has been further enhanced thanks to extra soundproofing.

Maintaining the 'premium value' theme more kit is now available, with the car's standard specification including Bluetooth, DAB, xenon headlights and sat-nav at base level. Leather seats, adaptive dampers, cruise control and parking sensors can be found on the higher spec GT models.

A long list of options includes an adaptive high beam headlight mode, heated and cooled front seats, blind spot warning, a reversing camera, a 'city safe' urban auto braking function and the ability to open the car's boot by sweeping your foot under the rear bumper –

great for when your hands are full with shopping.

Make no mistake, Volkswagen knows what it's doing with the CC. This generous level of standard and optional kit plays right into the hands of buyers seeking a plush-looking executive car with one eye on their modest budget. None of the more expensive traditional German choices can compete at this level.

And it's inside the CC where its high value character really comes to the fore. All the materials you can touch and see are a cut above anything else in its (almost) sub-£30,000 price range. Then again, this shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone already familiar with modern day Volkswagen interiors.

Satisfying

Driving the CC is just as satisfying as sitting in it and admiring the fixtures and fittings. Save for the standard-fit addition of Volkswagen's trick electronically controlled XDS differential on cars with more than 170 horsepower – that means the high output 2.0-litre diesel – little has changed since dropping the Passat name.

Like before, the CC delivers a refined and mature ride – even on the GT's large 18-inch alloy wheels – yet also proves engaging enough to raise a smile on twisty backroads. Volkswagen isn't promoting it as an-

out performance saloon, but the CC is a willing companion boasting more agility than its size suggests. Part of this performance is down to engine choice. There are 1.8 and 2.0-litre petrol units offering 160 and 210 horsepower respectively, but it's the 2.0-litre diesels in 140 and 170 horsepower guise that will prove the most popular. CO2 is a low 125g/km for the 140 and 139g/km for the 170 horsepower motor respectively due in part to engine stop-start brake energy regeneration technology.

Factor in a smooth-shifting DSG auto gearbox for a small CO2 penalty and you've got yourself an extremely polished and financially rewarding ownership experience. Volkswagen's been smart enough to only change the few details that needed polishing, proving that the CC was a fundamentally sound car in the first place. And long may it remain so.



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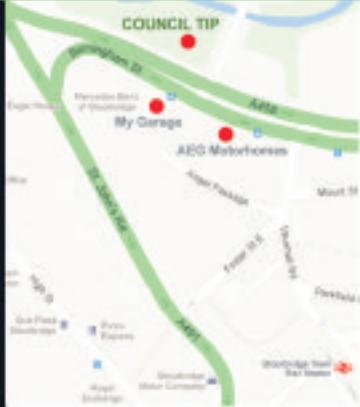
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SPORT

Old Hales lose tie and their discipline

Shrewsbury 2
Old Halesians 0

OLD Halesians' hockey firsts saw their promotion hopes slip away on a cold afternoon in Shrewsbury when they finished with just nine men.

The fixture was one of just a handful to survive the freezing temperatures but brought only disappointment for the visitors.

Shrewsbury dominated from the start, pressing high up the pitch and stifling Hales' attempts to get their free-flowing game.

The visitors did create some chances but they were unable to convert them.

Shrewsbury opened the scoring when a penalty corner was awarded against defender Ben Hughes for not being five metres from a Shrewsbury corner.

The penalty corner was well worked to give the home side a 1-0 lead.

Respond

Old Halesians had several penalty corners, but were unable to score following last-ditch defending from Shrewsbury.

The home team grabbed their second before half-time when a lapse in concentration allowed their midfielders to flood the D unmarked and slot the ball past keeper James Jones.

Hales responded well in the second period. Chances fell to Tom Bulteel, Josh Randhawa and Harry Hughes, but all three were unable to find the net.

Shrewsbury struck on the counter-attack, having an effort disallowed for a high stick.

Old Hales continued to pressurise and their penalty corner count increased, but they could not find a way past the Shrews' defence.

The disappointment of a poor performance turned into frustration as Old Hales lost their discipline.

Paul Harrold was suspended for dissent, and Hales were soon reduced to nine men, when Harry Hughes was yellow carded for throwing his stick after being substituted.

The double yellow carding will almost certainly lead to Hales being docked points.

Old Hales fifth lost 3-2 at Evesham.

Games for the seconds, thirds, fourths and ladies were all cancelled on Saturday due to frozen pitches, as was the first's England Hockey Trophy game on Sunday against Sutton Coldfield.



Coach Bob Dillon, left, instructs boxer Andy Slater

Boxing clever for initiative

LIONS ABC in Dudley has become the latest Black Country institute to throw its weight behind Sport England's Sportivate initiative.

Head trainer Bob Dillon, the Team GB high performance coach, has been welcoming young people into his gym to learn the basics of boxing, writes Craig Birch.

And Lions – based on Bull Street, Brierley Hill – are not the only ones doing their bit to encourage sporting activity in the area.

The University of Wolverhampton recently put on a six-week judo programme, while the Westminster School in Sandwell has also got involved,

forming a 16-strong squad with moderate learning disabilities running a wheelchair basketball session that doubles up as an after-school club.

Sportivate is National Lottery-funded and is being run by the Black Country Be Active Partnership, whose managing director Simon Hall singled out Lions for credit.

He said: "Lions Boxing Club are making a real difference in young people's lives, using boxing skills. It helps young people to gain fitness, personal development, qualifications in coaching and decreases anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood."

More than 1,150 young people in the

Black Country have been inspired to do sport in their own time in the first six months of the Olympic and Paralympic legacy initiative.

It is aimed at 14-to-25-year-olds who currently don't play sport in their own time. They are then helped to find a club or venue where they can take part in whichever sport they enjoy.

More than 80 sports projects will be delivered as part of the programme across a wide variety of sports.

All those who complete a course, missing no more than one session, and then continue to play for at least three months, will have the chance to enter a ballot for free London 2012 tickets.

Plenty of glory for new players

FORMER members of Stourbridge Judo Club hit the heights in their first competition.

The club has now closed, but several members have linked with Kidderminster's Samurai outfit – and took a series of medals at the club's Mini-Me Open Championships.

The Stourbridge players landed three golds, a silver and three bronzes.

Tom Jones was unlucky to lose against a Bromsgrove player but came back well to take the bronze.

Charlie Arnall was another player entering his first competition a few weight categories higher up.

He found the going difficult but kept attacking and was rewarded with another bronze.

New boy Ben Dunn started hesitantly but a win against an Essex player by maximum points gave him confidence.

He followed this up in his semi-final with one of the best throws of the day against a Droitwich player to put himself into the final.

Total

This was his toughest contest, against a Stroud player, but Dunn gained a high score and hung on to it to win the gold.

Connor Thomson, yet another ex-Stourbridge player who was competing for the first time, added another bronze.

That made a total of three golds and eight bronzes for the Samurai boys.

The Samurai girls had clocked up a gold, a silver and six bronzes from the first of the Stourbridge contingents got onto the mat.

Newcomer Toni Poulson soon got into her stride and a superb throw against a Gloucester girl earned her the gold medal.

Anabel Goodby, in the same category, started judo at Samuri but came with some of the former Stourbridge players. She showed plenty of determination and she added the bronze medal.

Another girl who lives in Stourbridge but who started with the Samurai, Charlotte Relf, took a bronze medal in a category dominated by the Samurai club where they took all four medals.

Another ex-Stourbridge girl making her competition debut, Eleanor Arnall, and Poulson got through to the final where Arnall's explosive power won the day.

The Samurai girls then added a silver and bronze.

Sacked after defeat, demos and apology

Wolves 1 Albion 5

A CRUSHING defeat at the hands of their local rivals sealed the fate of manager Mick McCarthy.

The abject display even brought a public apology from the Wolves boss, writes Tim Nash.

But his "sorry" after Sunday's game was not enough to save his job – or erase the pain of this humiliation for thousands of angry, disenchanted Wolves fans.

It's been more than a decade since we last saw fans demonstrating outside the ground, when Sir Jack Hayward was spat at.

The nature and magnitude of this thoroughly depressing setback was the trigger for hundreds to gather around the Billy Wright statue after the game and chant for the head of the manager.

There were still fans singing 'We want McCarthy out' more than an hour after the final whistle. One day later they got their wish. It was a black day in the history of Wolverhampton Wanderers and a new low for McCarthy.

Trouble

Any defeat hurts, and a loss to Albion倍添了 the pain. But the manner of this capitulation to employ the term used by McCarthy afterwards – cast a huge cloud over the club.

As Albion tore Wolves apart, there was the depressing sight of fans remonstrating angrily with people in the directors' box.

Trouble on and off the pitch, and it all led to the departure of a manager who was firmly entrenched in the deepest crisis of his reign. He has done a remarkable job over the last five-and-a-half years. It's difficult to imagine anyone getting more effort and commitment out of the players.

A more honourable man of more integrity you couldn't wish to find. At his press conference afterwards, he vowed to fight on, convinced he was still the man to ride the storm and lead Wolves to safety. But chair-



Mick McCarthy feels the pressure



A brief respite for Wolves as Steven Fletcher drags them level just before half-time

man Steve Morgan clearly decided McCarthy's presence had become counter-productive.

It seems there were a growing number of fans waiting to see him fail, and it is against that backdrop of discontent that Morgan had to weigh up whether his manager's time was up.

However, the fans' sniping at Morgan on Sunday about where he can stick his executive houses suggests the fans don't lay the blame squarely at the manager's door.

The defeat dropped Wolves back into the Premiership relegation zone, on goal difference. This time last season, they were bottom and two points from safety after beating Manchester United, with three more points than they have now.

But it's difficult to think the Wolves team of last season would have folded like this.

That they had dragged themselves level

by half-time courtesy of Steven Fletcher's fantastically executed 10th goal of the season was a travesty after a truly awful first half. Wayne Hennessey made four fine saves before being wrong-footed by Dave Edwards' deflection off Peter Odemwingie's low shot after he cut inside Matt Jarvis after 35 minutes.

Wolves started the second half well and Fletcher was inches away from giving them the lead only for his shot to deflect just wide off Jonas Olsson. Hennessey then undid his good work by dropping Olsson's routine shot to give Albion a 64th-minute lead.

Wolves went close again when Ben Foster made a superb reflex save from Fletcher's towering header before a similar effort from Roger Johnson was headed onto the bar by Youssouf Mulumbu.

But, in between, the alarm bells were

beginning to ring loudly as Kevin Foley

cleared off the line from Odemwingie. And from then on, Wolves were simply crushed.

More catastrophic defending allowed Odemwingie his second and Albion's third on 77 when he slid the ball home after Liam Ridgewell's header and Olsson's backheel following James Morrison's corner.

Everything that could have gone wrong did as old boy Keith Andrews drove home a fourth five minutes from time after Morrison skipped past Stephen Ward and crossed, followed by Odemwingie completing his hat-trick from close range on 88 minutes.

McCarthy gambled by playing three strikers from the start and it left Wolves woefully exposed in midfield, where they couldn't keep the ball and were left chasing shadows.

If ever there was a game crying out for Karl Henry and Emmanuel Frimpong, then this was it. But Wolves had to battle on without their two central midfielders.

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Heathens hero Jan O abandons comeback

HEATHENS legend Jan O Pedersen has admitted defeat in his bid to make a full-time speedway comeback.

Pedersen, the 1991 world champion, is one of the most popular riders ever to wear the famous green, red and white colours during the old Cradley days.

Now he will focus on his role as coach with the modern day Dudley Heathens, who race their home meetings at Monmore Green in Wolverhampton as the club seek a permanent home.

Pedersen said: "My body won't stand up to it any more but I'm really pleased I got back on the bike and I will do a few meetings here and there. I'm happy to take open bookings and maybe do 10-12 throughout the year, but that's all really."

Pedersen has moved to the Stourbridge area from his Danish base and is looking forward to getting involved with the Heathens.

"I'm very excited about the new season and I'm looking forward to catching up with all the riders," he said.

Signings

"We've been invited to Wolves press and practice on March 13 but I'm talking about a private practice session for just our riders."

"Hopefully we will get to know each other well before the season starts and the new signings, including myself, will settle in quickly."

Tickets for the evening with former Cradley favourite Greg Hancock are selling fast with over half the capacity already gone.

Hancock will be appearing at The Venue Conference and Banqueting Centre, High Street, Dudley on Saturday, March 17 at 8.30pm.

Tickets can be purchased at the club's online shop at www.dudleyheathens.co.uk or by sending a cheque payable to HSSC, 2 Caernarfon Way, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 2TR. Details: 07766 745681.

Star Kennedy at the Robins

TWO-TIME European Cup winner and former England international Alan Kennedy is to head Dudley Town's latest fundraiser.

The ex-Liverpool and Newcastle United star will be the guest at sportsman's evening at Gornal British Legion on June 16.

Tickets cost £20 or £180 for a table of 10 – call 07412 046050.

Game over

Match that ended McCarthy's reign
Page 35



Box clever

Lions ABC back fitness initiative
Page 35

e-mail: chronsport@expressandstar.co.uk

Jersey boys too strong for Saxons

THE Saxons may have flown south, leaving the frozen Midlands in their wake, but there was to be no return to winning ways as Jersey ran in six tries on their way to a 16th straight win.

Centre partners Donovan Sanders and James Copsey were the architects of the victory, causing constant problems to the Stour defence and claiming two tries apiece.

But it could have been a different tale had Stourbridge managed to build on their impressive opening.

Good work from the forwards saw them drive their hosts back and fly-half Chris Reekes swung a long pass to Jamie Hearn on

the wing, who sped in at the corner. Reekes' excellent conversion handing the visitors a 7-0 lead after just five minutes.

The quick response Jersey needed came through a Ross Broadfoot penalty and the fly-half then sparked a pacy attack which ended with Sanders feeding Copsey for the home side's first try.

There was little to choose between the sides for much of the half but the National One leaders pulled clear as the interval approached. Copsey claimed his second on the half-hour following good work from

Sanders, who then touched down with two minutes of the half to go.

That quickfire double was put to one side at the start of the second period and the Saxons again began to exert their authority up front with the forwards driving the Islanders' back. The pressure finally resulted in a yellow card for flanker Graham Bell, the Jersey captain, but Neil Mitchell's side were unable to add to their points tally.

And that was punished when Stourbridge incurred the wrath of referee Tom Davis, who sent second-half replacement James

Rodley to the sin bin on 68 minutes to be followed by Reakes five minutes later.

The home side took full advantage with No.8 Nick Trower finishing off a massive shunt from a close-range scrum before Sanders claimed his second with a solo effort. It was left to Jersey full-back Glenn Bryce to cross for the sixth and final try, Broadfoot converting the latter two.

Jersey: Bryce, Copsey, Maggs (Fuller 67), Sanders, Dawson, Broadfoot, O'Brien (McCormack 60), Landick (Gethings 82), Felton (Clyde-Smith 49), Hannay (Voss 68), Brownrigg, Bell, Lang, Trower.

Stourbridge: Williams, Bressington, Jarvis, Barkley (Rothinson 40), Hearn, Reekes, Richardson (Whitelock 67), Sturdy (68), Rodley (Page 49), Lawrence (Sturdy 67), Hurrell, Hughes, Garner, Rovira, Hall (Rodley 40).

Title fight switch, but Welborn boxes on

DUDLEY boxer Jason Welborn's Midland title defence is to go ahead as planned despite changes to the bill.

His welterweight clash with Coventry's James Flinn will still take place next month.

But instead of being the main event, it will be chief support as Wolverhampton Civic Hall stages its first British title fight in nearly four years with Enzo Maciocchini challenging Shane McPhilibin.

The former WBO world and European champion will headline as McPhilibin makes the first defence of his cruiserweight crown.

The revamped March 23 bill will be co-promoted by Frank Warren and broadcast on his subscription-only TV channel, BoxNation.

Break

But the original card, put together by promoter Paul 'PJ' Rowson, will largely be unaffected, although Tipper's Lee Glover is out.

Two six-rounders remain on the bill as former English lightweight champ Martin Gethin and the undefeated Birmingham middleweight Thomas Costello face international opposition.

Gethin made his comeback from a back injury in November and is working towards Anthony Crolla's British title.

Joining them are dynamic Dudley featherweights Dean Anderson and Zak the Ripper – Saqib Amir – with Anderson returning after a 15-month break.

Stourbridge's Steven Pearce and Brierley Hill's Karl Spencer, both from Shaun Cooper's gym Dudley, are also on the card.

For fight tickets, call the box office on 0870 320 7000 or the promoter on 07976 283157.

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketley, Telford, Thursday, February 16, 2012.

McCarthy is axed after Derby loss

MICK McCARTHY was sacked as Wolves manager this week as club chairman Steve Morgan said the board had "little or no choice".

The axe fell on Monday, the day after the team suffered their biggest Black Country derby home defeat in 50 years, a 5-1 thrashing by Albion. The club took the "difficult decision" to terminate his contract, which came after a poor run of results left them facing relegation.

Pressure on the boss, who is expected to leave with a £1 million compensation payout, reached a critical point with the humiliating Molineux loss to the Baggies.

But Wolves' previous alarming sequence of results after early season optimism – just 14 points from the previous

by Tim Nash

How the sacking unfolded

Sunday, 3.30pm-7.30pm: Dialogue is opened between Jez Moxey, Steve Morgan and the board.

7.30pm: Moxey and secretary Richard Skirrow leave Molineux.

7.30pm-10.30pm: Phone calls and emails continue between Moxey, Morgan and the board.

Monday, 7am: Moxey arrives at his Molineux office and calls Morgan. The decision is made to dismiss McCarthy.

7.30am-8.30am: Moxey visits McCarthy at Compton to deliver the news.

9.30am: The players arrive at Compton and are informed McCarthy has been sacked.

9.30am-10.30am: Moxey talks further with McCarthy and assistant manager Terry Connor and prepares a press statement.

Midnight later, Moxey left the training ground in his Jaguar.

He said later: "We have been on a journey for the last five-and-a-half-years of outstanding success – more than this club has seen in a generation and we have achieved our objectives.

"My entire time is now being devoted towards appointing a new manager."

Midfielder Jamie O'Hara used Twitter to write: "Gutted to see Mick go. Just sorry we couldn't have done better for him."

"Fantastic manager and man and wish him all the best."

Sunday's result left McCarthy facing the biggest crisis of his reign when he

drews of angry fans protested outside the Billy Wright Stand after the game.

The defeat sent Wolves back into the Premier League relegation zone, as attention turned to a replacement for McCarthy, who has been with the club since July 2006.



Last game – Mick McCarthy watches as the Albion defeat unfolds at Molineux

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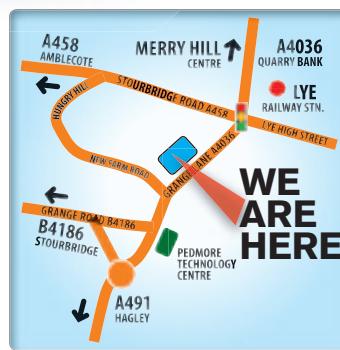
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